

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) filed a bill this week that will address glaring deficiencies in coordination among federal and state agencies that oversee water infrastructure and services along the Texas border. The bill will create a Southwest Border Region Water Task Force composed of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Army Corps of Engineers and other relevant federal and state agencies.

The task force will assess water needs along the border and determine how to ensure those needs are met. The task force will also prioritize water projects and submit a report every six months to Congress that will be made available to the public.

“Basic services should be available to all families living along the border, regardless of their means,” said Congressman Rodriguez. “With the technology and capability we have, no one should be without clean drinking water or wastewater services.”

H.R. 4719 comes as a result of a recent GAO study conducted at the request of Congressman Rodriguez regarding the severe water and wastewater challenges facing the border region. The study, which can be viewed at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10126.pdf> found that efforts to address the severe lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation systems have been largely ineffective. According to the EPA, waterborne diseases such as hepatitis A and cholera occur at much higher rates in the border region than elsewhere in Texas. A summary and full text of the bill can be found at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10126.pdf>

“I believe this report provides conclusive data to back up what we have known for a long time – that water needs on the border will not be solved without greater coordination among federal agencies,” said Congressman Rodriguez. “This bill will help remedy the gaps that have developed over time in the coordination and cooperation needed to provide adequate services in this region.”

The bill’s co-sponsors include Congressman Henry Cuellar (TX-28), Congressman Ruben Hinojosa (TX-15), Congressman Raul Grijalva (AZ-07), Congressman Silvestre Reyes (TX-16) and Congressman Harry Teague (NM-02).

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